

## **Investigating Pupils' Perceptions of Fieldwork Approaches to History Within the Malaysian Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools**

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**Abstract** This study was designed to evaluate fieldwork approaches to exploring history in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (ICSS). Eight hundred Lower Secondary Schools pupils from the states of Perak and Terengganu were selected for the study using the convenience sampling method. The data gathered from the study was analysed using descriptive and inference statistics from the SPSS programme (Version 15). According to the results, more than ninety percent of the respondents agreed that the fieldwork method gave them an opportunity to “identify differences between the past and present” in Malaysian ICSS history. More positive responses were received from pupils in Perak than in Terengganu. Furthermore, the number of positive responses from science and regular schools were very high; boys and girls responded more-or-less equally, with Form Three being the most supportive. Responses according to ethnicity were also high. It is hoped that the findings of this study will enhance the teaching and learning of history through fieldwork as well as improving pupils' overall academic performance.

**Keywords:** history, fieldwork approaches, Integrated Curriculum, active citizen

**Abstrak** Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menguji peluang pelajar memperoleh inti pati pendidikan sejarah dengan pendekatan kerja lapangan yang disepadukan dalam kurikulum pendidikan sejarah sekolah menengah di Malaysia. Ia melibatkan 800 pelajar sekolah menengah rendah dari negeri Perak dan Terengganu yang dipilih melalui kaedah persampelan rawak mudah. Data yang dikumpul dianalisis secara statistik deskriptif dan inferens menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 15. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan maklum balas penerimaan pelajar di negeri Perak amat menggalakkan dan lebih tinggi dari negeri Terengganu. Maklum balas yang diterima daripada pelajar sekolah sains dan sekolah harian adalah tinggi, manakala pelajar Tingkatan Tiga didapati memberi maklum balas yang tertinggi, pelajar lelaki dan perempuan pula menunjukkan peratus maklum balas yang hampir sama dan maklum balas berkaitan etnik juga didapati sangat tinggi. Keseluruhan kajian mempamerkan lebih daripada sembilan puluh peratus responden mengakui bahawa kaedah kerja lapangan memberi peluang kepada pelajar untuk mengenal pasti perbezaan peristiwa yang lepas dan peristiwa semasa seperti yang terkandung dalam kurikulum bersepadu pendidikan Sejarah Malaysia (ICSS). Diharapkan kajian ini menghasilkan dapatan yang efektif dalam meningkatkan proses

*pengajaran dan pembelajaran melalui kerja lapangan Sejarah dan seterusnya mampu memperbaiki pencapaian akademik pelajar secara keseluruhan.*

**Kata kunci:** sejarah, kaedah kerja lapangan, kurikulum bersepadu, warganegara aktif.

## INTRODUCTION

History fieldwork was introduced into the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (ICSS) Malaysia in 1989 and reviewed in 2000 and 2008. The curriculum guidelines indicate important procedures which need to be taken by both teachers and pupils involved in the planning and implementation of fieldwork programmes. Since the learning takes place outside the classroom, sufficient preparation must be done inside the classroom. Fieldwork must be followed up with appropriate activities which reinforce pupils' learning. Such approaches were first introduced in Malaysia via ICSS Local History in 1989. The focus was on enabling pupils at lower secondary levels to obtain knowledge and develop understanding, interest, and sensitivity towards human beings and their environments as stipulated in the National Development Policy, National Education Philosophy and Philosophy of History Education of Malaysia (Ministry of Education, 1988; 2008).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The History Unit, Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), Ministry of Education (MOE), Malaysia (2008) affirmed that the fundamental aim of fieldwork approaches in history is to provide opportunities for pupils to explore and investigate the fragmentary evidence of the past within their immediate locality. The lives of people from the past are illuminated through their written records, buildings, clothes, utensils, vehicles and other resources. These physical relics of the past play a significant role in the way pupils learn history.

Various authors, such as Jeremy Black and Donald M. MacRaild in *Studying History* (1997), Beverly Southgate in *History: What & Why* (1997) and C. Behan McCullagh in *The Truth of History* (1998) state that basically the word "history" carries two meanings in common parlance: first, it refers to "what actually happened in the past" and second, it relates to the representation of that past in "the work of historians." Marwick (1989, p. 6) gives a rather comprehensive definition of history that consists of four components: everything that actually happened in the past that is "the human past," the activity of enquiry into that past based on the rigorous study of sources, and the conscientious striving to challenge myth and legend; the interpretation or interpretations produced by this activity; the accumulated body of knowledge about the past; and finally those aspects of the past felt to be significant or interesting which have been made accessible by historical enquiry and the accumulating body of historical knowledge, namely, those parts of the past which are known and documented to which the body of knowledge refers.

The role of history fieldwork is to contribute to the development of information collecting and handling skills; to make pupils aware that the visible remains of the past around us are as important a resource for our understanding of history as written documents; to equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and techniques which will enable them to identify those remains, study and interpret them and place them in their wider historical context; to help pupils to reconstruct the lives of the people associated with a site at particular periods in the past; to stimulate interest and facilitate the study of local history and history as a whole; to contribute to the development of “artistic” responses and cross-curricular activities; to provide the basic experience for environmental studies which is considered essential because it encourages observation, presentation of material and comparison; to create in pupils an interest in the historical exploration of their environment which will continue as a leisure pursuit beyond school

As a foundation to history fieldwork, pupils should be given sufficient exposure to the “nature” of fieldwork approaches to history. This accords well with the findings of Andreotti (1993), Watts (1993) and Southgate (1997) who realised that by using artefacts discovered on sites as a stimulus, it is possible to elicit and extend children’s understanding of the historical concepts of change, chronology, and cause and effect. As Wood and Holden (1997) admitted, the study of artefacts in history fieldwork involves active learning and direct experience. This provides opportunities for children to discuss their ideas and make connections with their prior knowledge and experience in the quest for historical understanding. Ideally, this should be followed by the teacher correcting misconceptions, extending children’s learning through the input of new knowledge, and helping them to make connections with other disciplines and prior experience. This is because successful teaching and learning depends on appropriate teaching methods which take into account the nature of progression in children’s understanding (Wood and Holden, 1997; Cohen *et al.*, 1996; White, 1994; Brooks *et al.*, 1993; Dickinson, 1992).

Archer (1985) clarifies that the study of history fieldwork should involve “field work” rather than “field teaching.” He defines “field teaching” as describing and explaining, posing and answering questions and stimulating discussion. On the other hand, by “field work,” he is referring to pupils who play a much more active role examining, describing and explaining the historical features of the site studied or visited. Archer (1985, p. 49) describes the involvement, participation and contribution of pupils in the fieldwork study as follows:

*Fieldwork is to be seen essentially as one of the means whereby pupils can use the physical, visible remains of the past, in conjunction with other source material, in class and in situ to construct an account of the thoughts and actions of people in the past. Such activity may take place in the area immediately adjacent to the school or much farther afield.*

This shows that fieldwork enables pupils to be more independent in their study, to acquire more historical information, to develop thinking creativity, to encourage interest in learning history and to become more self-confident.

More specifically, the History Unit, CDC, Malaysia (CDC, MOE, 1988; 2000) outlines the objectives of history fieldwork in Forms 1–3 as follows:

1. To develop understanding of the variety and location of evidence available for the study of fieldwork history;
2. To develop understanding of human activity in the past, linking it, as appropriate, with the present and the locality;
3. To develop understanding of the concepts of causes and consequences, continuity and change, similarity and difference;
4. To develop an ability to recall, evaluate and select knowledge relevant to the context and to deploy it in a clear and coherent form;
5. To develop essential study skills such as the ability to find, collect, classify and evaluate information from primary and secondary sources;
6. To develop skills necessary to study the variety of historical evidence and deploy the conclusions in a clear and coherent form; and
7. To develop social and life skills including self-confidence, a sense of achievement, curiosity, as well as those related to decision-making, general study and communication.

In this respect, the Ministry of Education (CDC, MOE, 2000) designed the ICSS history programme with the intention of achieving the aims stipulated in the education philosophy and national development plan, that is to produce individuals who are “balanced and harmonious; spiritually, cognitively and physically skilful; and who practise high moral values.”

Moreover, a fieldwork approach to history is in accordance with the work of Jean Piaget (1958) whose theories concern the development of logical, interrelated systems or thinking patterns known as “operations.” Piaget focuses on the creation of logical, deductive reasoning in children and the development of the ability to think in abstract terms, to pose hypotheses and to reach conclusions. A child’s actions and environment are of fundamental importance in his or her emotional and intellectual development. This aptitude may appear in the formal operational stage at 11 or 12 years of age, namely, Form One.

Hence, it is obvious that learning and teaching history are in mutual accord and they should be utilised to create perfect human personality with the personality proficiency of JERISAH as the essences of principles and philosophy of education in? Malaysia, western countries and Islam. Specifically, the essences are healthy, intelligent, and skillful body (*Jasmani*—physical); stable, harmonic and patient emotion (*Emosi*—emotion); soul (*Rohani*—spiritual) based on the paradigm of *Tauhid Syhadatain*; positive, creative and innovative intellectual (*Intelektual*—intellectual); effective, integrative and appreciative socialisation (*Sosialisasi*); everlasting, cheerful and sophisticated nature (*Alam*—environment); faithful, quality and integrated prayers for Allah (*Hamba*—servant of God) (Mohamad Johdi, 2010).

Mohamad Johdi and Hairuddin (2009) discovered that history fieldwork contain many usefulness such as to develop, spark or stimulate, motivate, investigate, prove, gain social experience, social skills, build teacher–student relation, teaching–learning method, and fulfil the National Curriculum. Mohamad Johdi and Abu Bakar (2009) affirmed in their study that seven out of nine challenges of Malaysia’s Vision 2020 are intuitively related to history fieldwork approaches.

It is clear that the effective used of history fieldwork can enhance student interest in developing the country towards the advancement of “first class mentality” of the human capital of Malaysia.

With regards to the above, this study concentrates on the introduction of history fieldwork as a compulsory coursework component in the ICSS history curriculum and seeks to observe its development at the various stages of implementation.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study examines the pupils’ perceptions of the basic role of fieldwork approaches in history. More specifically, the research intends to answer the following questions:

1. Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them an opportunity to identify differences between the past and present?
2. Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them an opportunity to suggest reasons why people in the past acted as they did?
3. Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them an opportunity to understand that stories may be about real or fictional people?
4. Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them an opportunity to develop an awareness that different stories give different versions of what happened?

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study involved 400 pupils from Lower Perak District and 400 pupils from Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia. Identifying the sample and getting permission to conduct the study were done with the assistance of the Education, Planning and Research Development Division (EPRD), the Ministry of Education, the State Education Departments of Perak and Terengganu, and the principals of the respective schools. The sample was stratified according to district, types of school, level of education, gender and ethnic group.

The questionnaires were developed from various books, journals, newspapers, magazines, and official documents from the Ministry of Education of Malaysia and England. In order to determine content validity, the researcher sought assistance and guidance from his supervisor, Professor Dr Ruth Watts of Birmingham University School of Education, lecturers and colleagues of the Institute of Education (INSTED) and

International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The questionnaire was pilot-tested on 50 sampled pupils to attain reliability (Cohen and Manion, 1994).

The researcher distributed the validated questionnaires to the respondents with the help of senior assistants and classroom teachers. The data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 15). The questionnaire was verified by the researcher to ensure that all items were responded to appropriately. The results of this study are displayed according to the number of responses, percentage, mean and standard deviations. Best and Kahn (1990), Coolican (1996) and Wiersma (2005) stated that in normal language, “mean” is an average, and “standard deviation” is simply the square root of the variance. Mean is normally used to measure the “central tendency” of responses in “descriptive statistics.” Standard deviation is used to measure the “dispersion” of responses.

In addition to the questionnaires, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with every respondent of approximately 30 minutes duration. Forty respondents were selected using convenience sampling and with assistance from the classroom teachers (with prior permission from the school principals). The principals, teachers and students were very supportive and helpful. The respondents were asked the standard closed and semi-structured questions which had been pilot-tested. The answers given by these respondents were followed by relevant, provocative questions with the aim of examining their knowledge and understanding of certain issues (Babbie, 1977; Wiersma, 2005).

The interviews were tape-recorded with prior permission from the interviewees and with consent from the classroom teachers and principals. All information acquired from these interviews were treated in the highest confidence and only used for the purpose of this research. The researcher discovered that the interviewees’ statements or arguments were based on the topics they had been introduced to in history fieldwork either individually, in a group or a class visit. This could be the reason that some of the respondents used plural pronouns, especially “we” in their conversations.

The presentation of the findings were mainly based on the interviewees’ verbal answers and to a much lesser extent on their nonverbal communication. Hence, only answers considered relevant to the research questions were selected and included in the discussions. Some of the common answers were scrutinised and presented in one quotation, sentence or item. The background and distribution of respondents are shown in the following sections.

## BACKGROUND OF THE SAMPLES

The study was conducted in the districts of Lower Perak and Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, involving 400 pupils from each district. These districts were selected because they met the criteria set by this study, specifically regarding the location, type of schools, level of education, gender and ethnicity. There were three types of schools involved in the study, namely, “regular” (n=520 or 65%), “science” (n=140 or 17.5%) and “religious” (n=140 or 17.5%) schools. The main sample of this study were lower secondary school pupils comprising Forms One, Two and Three with 240 (30%) pupils from each form. Selected Form Four pupils (n=80 or 10%) who had experienced history fieldwork teaching and learning in Form Three were also included in order to compliment the findings of this research. The researcher selected and distributed the questionnaires to the same number of boys (n=400 or 50%) and girls (n=400 or 50%).

The ethnic proportioning used in the study corresponded to the composition of the three major ethnic groups in Malaysia, namely, Malays (n=528 or 66%), Chinese (n=168 or 21%), and Indians (n=104 or 13%).

The results and findings of this study on fieldwork approaches to history are presented and discussed in the following sections.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

For the purpose of data analysis, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to address the research question.

### **Pupils’ Perceptions on Fieldwork Approaches to History**

The pupils were asked to respond to four questions regarding opportunities afforded via fieldwork approaches to history. The overall results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 reveals that most pupils agreed with Item 1, (i.e., 92.4%, n=739). Of the four items, the lowest percentage was for Item 4 (i.e., 84.0%, n=672).

The analysis and discussion of the pupils’ highest perception of Item 1 according to “states,” “types of school,” “level of education,” “gender” and “ethnic groups” is presented in Table 2. The discussion on the remaining three questions centres on the interview findings.

**Table 1:** Pupils' perceptions on opportunities provided by fieldwork approaches to history

No.	Do you think that fieldwork approaches give you an opportunity to:	Pupils' Responses (N=800)						Mean	SD
		VSDA 1	SDA 2	DA 3	AA 4	SAA 5	VSAA 6		
		Disagreement			Agreement				
1.	Identify differences between past and present.	19 2.4%	11 1.4%	31 3.9%	100 12.5%	327 40.9%	312 39.0%	5.05	1.08
61 (7.6%)			739 (92.4%)						
2.	Suggest reasons why people in the past acted as they did.	14 1.8%	36 4.5%	72 9.0%	246 30.8%	297 37.1%	135 16.9%		
121 (15.1%)			679 (84.9%)						
3.	Understand that stories may be about real or fictional people	17 2.1	30 3.8	45 5.6	168 21.0	238 29.8	302 37.8	4.86	1.21
92 (11.5%)			708 (88.5%)						
4.	Develop an awareness that different stories give different versions of what happened.	21 2.6%	27 3.4%	80 10.0%	223 27.9%	297 37.1%	152 19.0%		
128 (16.0%)			672 (84.0%)						
Average Responses		12.5%			87.5%			4.62	1.19

Key: VSDA – Very Strongly Disagree, SDA – Strongly Disagree, DA – Disagree, AA – Agree, SAA – Strongly Agree, VSAA – Very Strongly Agree.

**Research question: Do you think that fieldwork approaches to history give you an opportunity to identify differences between past and present?**

The findings in Table 2 reveal a higher proportion of agreement in the state of Perak than in Terengganu. The scores were 95.5 percent (n=382?) and 89.3 percent (n=357?) respectively. These results indicate a slightly different level of response to the question depending on locality.

In the “Types of School” category, both the science and regular schools responded very positively with 95.7 percent (n=140) and 92.3 percent (n=520) agreeing, respectively. On the other hand, 89.2 percent (n=140) of the participants from religious schools also responded in the affirmative. These results indicate that all three types of school are in broad agreement on a response to the question.

With regard to the category of level of secondary education, the Form Three pupils responded most unanimously with 95.8 percent (n=240) agreeing, followed by Form One, 93.3 percent (n=240) and Form Two, 89.6 percent (n=240). The response from Form Four was less unanimous, but is still consistent with the other groups with 87.5 percent (n=80) agreeing. The findings indicate that all the forms strongly supported the contention.



The 400 boys and 400 girls taking part in the survey responded almost identically with 92.7 percent and 92.0 percent respectively supporting the proposition.

Finally, responses based on ethnicity followed the overall trend. In this category, 94.0 percent (n=168) of the Chinese, 91.9 percent (n=528) of the Malays and 91.3 percent (N=104) of the Indians responded positively. These results indicate that ethnicity did not lead to deviance in the participants' perceptions on the issue.

**Table 2:** Pupils' perceptions on the issue of whether fieldwork approaches to history give them an opportunity to identify differences between past and present (by category)

	<b>Respondents (N=800)</b>	<b>Disagreement (%)</b>	<b>Agreement (%)</b>
States	Perak (n=400)	18 (4.5)	382 (95.5)
	Terengganu (n=400)	43 (10.7)	357 (89.3)
Types of School	Regular (n=520)	40 (7.7)	480 (92.3)
	Science (n=140)	6 (4.3)	134 (95.7)
	Religious (n=140)	15 (10.7)	125 (89.3)
Level of Education	Form 1 (n=240)	16 (6.7)	224 (93.3)
	Form 2 (n=240)	25 (10.4)	215 (89.6)
	Form 3 (n=240)	10 (4.2)	230 (95.8)
	Form 4 (n=80)	10 (12.5)	70 (87.5)
Gender	Boys (n=400)	29 (7.3)	371 (92.7)
	Girls (n=400)	32 (8.0)	368 (92.0)
Ethnicity	Malays (n=528)	43 (8.1)	485 (91.9)
	Chinese (n=168)	10 (6.0)	158 (94.0)
	Indians (n=104)	9 (8.7)	95 (91.3)

The following sections discuss the results of the interviews with the selected respondents based on the four questions on the nature of fieldwork approaches to history within the ICSS, Malaysia.

### **Question 1: Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches to history give them an opportunity to identify differences between past and present?**

When respondents were asked to elaborate on their answers to the questions in the interview section, a range of views were presented. Most of the respondents believed that fieldwork approaches to history can identify differences between past and present. In the words of one of the pupils from Lower Perak, "By visiting the historical sites we can see different type of buildings, tools and other artefacts. These things can be used to identify differences between past and present" (P4).

One observation made from the survey was that pupils from Perak responded more positively to Question 1 (Table 2) than those from Terengganu. In fact, the district of Lower Perak where the survey was carried out has fewer historical sites and remnants compared to the district of Kuala Terengganu. It is possible that the pupils in Perak are aware that they have lost most of their local heritage and tourist attractions. Their locality is not as attractive as before and what is left is only the story of the past. This could be one of the reasons why the pupils in Perak responded so positively to the question.

Admittedly, one of the reasons for the high proportion of positive responses to the question from science and regular schools is that the pupils concur with Western history writers such as Blyth (1989) and Marwick (1989) who state that one of the roles of history is to enable pupils to differentiate between the past and the present. Moreover, Carr (1990) emphasises that the function of the historian is to master and understand the past as the key to the understanding of the present.

On the other hand, it is highly possible that pupils in religious schools were also influenced by the “nature of history” as conceptualised in religious subjects. They understood more about life and the affects of what people did and thus learn how to behave in the future. This was mentioned by one of the pupils in a religious school: “What I learned from history fieldwork is beneficial for present and future” (P20). This is in line with another girl who said that, “The story of starvation during Japanese occupation in Malaya as told by my mother really impressed me. I can learn a lot of lessons from it” (P22). In fact, learning from the past for the benefit of the present and future seems to be the most common approach to teaching history in religious schools.

Another reason for the high number of positive responses amongst Form Three pupils is that history fieldwork is assessed and included in the Lower Secondary Assessment. Pupils are therefore more likely to pay greater attention to the basic concept of fieldwork. Thus, the concept and nature of the subject is still fresh in the minds of the pupils. The reason for the less positive responses from Form Two pupils was that lessons were taken for granted in Form One due to the lack of imminent assessment. It is possible that the Form Four pupils think that the “past stays in the past” and thus has little relation to other school subjects such as Science and Mathematics. A Form Four boys in Perak said, “It is difficult to see the relationship between history and additional mathematics” (P9). This is echoed by another pupil who said, “We do not discuss history in pure mathematics” (P31). Both of them agreed that what they acquired in history fieldwork was for the sake of the subject itself. However, the positive responses of the gender and ethnic groups were very encouraging.

**Question 2: Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them an opportunity to suggest reasons why people in the past acted as they did?**

The interviews were conducted at a school in Perak located near a modern *padi* farm which is funded by the World Bank under the Krian-Sungai Manik Development programme.

One of the pupils said, “I can still remember that my grandfather used buffaloes to plough the *padi* (rice) field behind our house. He took several days to finish the job. At that time the people used ‘sabit’ (chisel or L-shaped knife) to harvest *padi*” (P2). Another pupil stated, “The farmers carried the *padi* on their back to move to a nearby place and used bicycles to go further. Some of them used bullock carts” (P1).

Asked why such activities were practised in the past, pupils P1 and P2 gave the same answer: “At that time, there was no ploughing tractor and no harvesting machine in the place. The road was very narrow and not suitable for cars or lorry to carry the harvested *padi*.” One of the pupils said, “It was not very long ago . . . sometime in the 1960s . . . my father had not married yet. This is what he told me about his experiences during his younger days” (P2).

A girl from Form Four clarified, “Nowadays everything is different. The farmers use tractors to plough the field. They use harvesting machines when the *padi* is ripe. They transport the *padi* in gunny sacks mostly by motorcycles, and some by small lorries” (P4). This information enables pupils to develop understanding and skills to cope with new areas of knowledge and development in technology as stated in the objectives of ICSS history.

In fact, Statement B2 is basic to the nature of history fieldwork as it is related to the concept of empathy. The pupils need to think and give reasons why people in the past acted as they did, or why people in the past failed to adopt better courses of action. Perhaps some pupils might see the failure as a general function of time and evolution, that is, the further back we go, the more backward or primitive is the people.

The real basis of all this is the inability of the pupil to recognise that people in the past often could not know whether in general or specific to the situation in which they were called upon to act—what the pupil now knows and takes for granted. Add to this, the pupils’ inability to envisage the inherent complexity of human institutions and interactions and the past becomes a catalogue of absurd behaviour to which the only possible reaction is one of irritated incomprehension and contempt.

At this level, the additional difficulty that people in the past saw things very differently from us and had different values, goals and expectations, enters the pupils’ calculations as only a part of the problem and not as the first step towards attempting at a solution. However, some pupils begin to realise that it was the technology that was less modern than today—not the people. This was confirmed by one of the pupils who said, “At that time there were no tractors available here. The land surface was not suitable for harvesting machines. The farmers had to do everything manually. Most of them were self-subsistence farmers” (P4).

Many of the interviewed pupils mentioned that they discovered these issues during their history fieldwork. They agreed that this approach gave them the opportunity to suggest reasons why people in the past acted as they did.

This is in line with the aim of the ICSS formulated by the CDC, Ministry of Education (2000) in that analysis and judgement must be illumined by imagination to provide the understanding of people of the past that characterises the historian’s perspective. The pupil has to be able to enter the mind and feelings of all the persons involved in an event and appreciate their differing attitudes without necessarily approving of their motives if they are to understand why, given their situation, they acted as they did.

Moreover, the important point to be noted is that the imagination must be disciplined by the evidence available (Andreetti, 1993).

With regard to the above, Sebba (1994:7) clarified that “the importance of history as a vehicle for delivering this entitlement comes from a number of aspects of teaching history which are intrinsic to the subject.” First, history deals with human motivation; and second, history has a very important part to play in pupils’ cultural development. Carpenter (1990), and Smith and Holden (1994) stated that an exploration of why people acted in the way they did often reveals dimensions of motivation which are usually social and cultural, often moral and sometimes spiritual. It is difficult to find a better way to understand one’s own culture than by looking at others. In fact, this is the true territory of history.

### **Question 3: Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them the opportunity to understand that stories may be about real or fictional people?**

The respondents raised different points concerning their decisions which were discussed in the interviews with the researcher.

Three Form One pupils (P36, P39 and P41) from three different schools in Terengganu (who coincidentally did the same topic) stated that they visited Telemong, the birthplace of Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong, the instigator of the Farmers Uprisings of 1926, 1927 and 1929 (Abdullah Zakaria, 1986). They claimed that they got the facts and evidence by interviewing his families and relatives. All of them agreed that using fieldwork approaches to history gives them the opportunity to distinguish which stories may be real and which one is fictional. This thought is in line with Blyth (1989) who stated that history is about real people and real events interacting with each other in the past.

In the interviews, a Form Three pupil said, “What I acquired from my fieldwork were facts about Kiyai Haji Yasin. His contributions to religious matters, education, socio-economic activities and politics were real” (P15). Another pupil mentioned, “Dato Haji Hasan#Adli, the figure who was responsible for the development and upgrading of *Madrasah Ulum-Syariah*. At the present this school has a joint-programme with the University of Al-Azhar, Egypt” (P14). The researcher was informed by the school administration that *Madrasah Ulum-Syariah* was the first religious school in Perak to show “great” progress by securing a partnership with a higher education establishment in another country. This can help pupils to understand and appreciate the nation’s history as well as the significance of the socio-cultural milieu in accordance with the ICSS aspirations.

The pupils re-affirmed that a fieldwork approach can present them with opportunities to find whether the stories are about real or fictional people. This is in line with Marwick (1989) who stressed that one of the important aspects of history is the activity of enquiry into the past based on the rigorous study of sources and the conscientious striving to challenge myth and legend.

These answers were commonly highlighted by respondents during the interviews. They realised that some of the information presented by the narrators or source persons was exaggerated. A science school pupil from Lower Perak commented, “It is difficult to prove the story that Sungai Manik was defended by eight ‘bullet-proofed’ leaders during the Bintang Tiga Communist attack on the village” (P16). This is supported by the argument of another pupil who stated, “. . . and it is also difficult to totally reject the story, because we can see the result, that there is not a single Chinese living in Sungai Manik today” (P15). Perhaps, such awareness gives pupils the confidence and the resilience to face challenges in life as stipulated in the ICSS history programme. Further investigation and more objective research by qualified historians are clearly required.

**Question 4: Do pupils think that fieldwork approaches give them an opportunity to develop an awareness that different stories give different versions of what happened?**

One of the in-depth interviews with the pupils in Perak was particularly interesting.

A Form Two pupil of a science school stated, “We visited Pasir Salak in Kampung Gajah Teluk Intan. It is the place where J.W.W. Birch, the first British Resident was assassinated” (P17). Another pupil who covered the same topic said, “We acquired different information about the reasons for the assassination. There were three main reasons given by the local people” (P13). First, the introduction of a new law by Birch; second, threats to the interests of local noblemen; and, third, Birch’s lack of understanding of the language. The pupils claimed that the reasons were given by three different categories of people.

It is difficult to determine the “immediate and ultimate” reason because the pupils acquired different versions of what happened. In fact, pupils P13 and P17 both argued that they were more confused by the third reason “*tak faham bahasa*.” This phrase can be interpreted in a number of ways, such as “did not understand the language,” “did not listen to people,” “did not respect the people” and “did not understand the norms and culture.” The pupils (P13 and P17) stated that they managed to clarify the reasons acquired in the fieldwork by discussion in class with the teacher in order to get a more conclusive answer. This is an example of what Marwick (1989) considers as the general attempt by humans to describe, reconstruct and interpret the past. The historian’s “dilemma” has been clarified by Cooper (1992) and Southgate (1997): one must read not only on, but between the lines of a record to achieve reconstruction. But this usually cannot be done, without an underpinning of enabling knowledge.

From the findings of the study, it is clear that fieldwork approaches to history are significantly related to the theories of Jean Piaget (1958) which concern the development of logical, interrelated systems or thinking patterns known as “operations.” The study focuses on the creation of logical, deductive thinking in pupils and the development of the capacity to think in abstract terms, to pose hypotheses and to reach conclusions. These habits, known as the problem-solving abilities are formed through the interaction of the pupil with his or her environment where new experiences are assimilated into existing thought patterns. The pupil’s actions and environment or historical sites are of fundamental

importance in his or her emotional and intellectual development. This aptitude may appear in the formal operational stage at 11 or 12 years of age (Form One). As a result of this existing dimension of “pure thought,” pupils may show the ability to take the results of concrete operational thought, shape them into propositions or hypotheses and deduce further information from them. Therefore, the relationship between the findings of this study and Jean Piaget’s theory has clearly been established.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from the interviews show that the study of fieldwork in history fulfil a variety of objectives in line with the ICSS, Malaysia (1988, 2000). Firstly, fieldwork make pupils aware that the visible remains of the past around us are as important as a resource for understanding history as written documents; second, it equip pupils with knowledge, skills and techniques which will enable them to identify remains, study and interpret them, and place them in their wider historical context; third, it enable pupils to reconstruct the lives of the people associated with a settlement at a particular period or periods in the past; and finally, fieldwork make pupils interested in exploring the history of an environment, a practice which they will find a rewarding leisure pursuit as a school student or in later years.

However, the overall mean achievement of 4.62 out of 6.00 for nature shows a lack of complete satisfaction with the implementation of fieldwork approaches and the potential for enhancement. These achievements indicate that there are still some weaknesses in the implementation of the subject in accordance with the ICSS, Malaysia.

Therefore, based on the results of the study, it is recommended that: first, greater effort be made to inspire pupils to be more sensitive about their environment and to take a greater role in the development of their surroundings; second, science schools clarify to their pupils the meaning and importance of history fieldwork in order to inspire them to be more scientifically creative; and third, Malay pupils from the regular schools be relieved of their “aimless dreams” and helped to develop objective reasons why people in the past acted as they did.

Another crucial problem highlighted in the study is the less-than-totally-successful implementation of fieldwork methods by teachers. The researcher believed that this was not due to a lack of motivation, but to a lack of exposure, knowledge and skills. Educational administrators need to employ expertise to solve the problem. In relation to this matter, the researcher strongly recommends that teachers be given sufficient training in order to equip them with appropriate knowledge and skills in the implementation of fieldwork approaches to history. This training should also include the exposure of teachers to elements associated with effective ICSS history curriculum development.

## CONCLUSION

The views of pupils on fieldwork approaches to history in accordance with the ICSS are generally very positive. Furthermore, the study reveals that such approaches give pupils the opportunity to identify differences between the past and present. Their adoption also exposes pupils to a plethora of historical sources from the simplest and nearest to the more complex and abstract with activities set by the teacher to help pupils understand better. Capturing the pupils' interest by using stimulating sources is fundamental and perhaps should be implemented as a first stage in the fieldwork programme to be followed by discovery learning for important sources. Using such a template will enable pupils to acquire knowledge and to master skills that will serve them well in daily life. It also enhance their intellectual capacity with respect to rational, critical and creative thinking. History fieldwork assigns to pupils the task of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of those to come. This is important if they are to develop the abilities and faculties necessary for the betterment of themselves and society. This is in accordance with the view that history is about the past teaching us by way of examples, inspiring us in the present and preparing us for future eventualities.

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